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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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OUR NEW CHALLENGE

Summary of remarks by R. E. Short, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, at University of Delaware Agricultural Substation Field Day, Georgetown, Delaware, 12 o'clock noon, August 5, 1953.

Eleven years ago this fine substation was established. It is doing an outstanding job in helping to improve the agriculture of Southern Delaware. You have here an excellent example of how, on a local basis, it is possible to find solutions to area problems and at the same time share these solutions with others outside your immediate area.

One of the great things about our Nation is the way that agricultural people, here and in similar areas all across the country, recognize their problems candidly and tackle them scientifically. This combination of common sense and science pays off, as is amply demonstrated at this field station by your many contributions to the poultry, horticultural and truck crop industries.

It is this sort of approach that has brought about the great strides in our agriculture in recent years. Since prewar, yields of all crops in the United States are up a third. Potato yields are up 95 percent. Milk production per cow is up 18 percent. Hens each year lay an average of 37 more eggs.

The personnel of this station, and your many cooperating farmer friends, can take just pride in having contributed to these spectacular gains.

But even greater challenges lie ahead. They tell us that by 1975 our present 159 million population may have grown to 200 million. New cropland will not increase in proportion. Science and good farming will have to meet the challenge. This will mean more and better research, and the extending of this research in even better fashion to farmers.

A few years ago we had a large backlog of unused agricultural research. It takes

a few years before laboratory or field station findings are in general application on farms. Wartime pressures greatly accelerated the application of research and we have been using up our backlog at a great rate ever since. Now, in some cases, we are nearing the bottom of the barrel. We encounter farm production problems for which there is no ready answer. Farming is a constant struggle to cooperate with nature — to resist those pests and diseases that are harmful and to utilize those forces that are helpful. We need to have more and more facts in these years ahead, and your station's role will be an important one.

I am confident that you are going to meet this challenge of production. And therefore I would like to turn to another challenge that sometimes we are inclined to forget — and that is the challenge of what happens to our agricultural products after we have produced them.

Here at this station we can work out effective new methods and develop outstanding new varieties. We can get farmers to accept them and utilize them. But to what avail if the development of transportation, handling, and marketing of these products does not go hand in hand?

Farmers today are receiving something like 45 cents out of the consumer's food dollar. This is 2 cents less than a year ago. Farm prices are down 12 percent, whereas handling charges have gone up. Some of these handling charges are inflexible but other portions can be reduced, to the farmer's advantage. Campaigns in dairy areas, for example, have improved the quality of fresh milk leaving the farm and thereby cut down on handling losses. More of this sort of educational work needs to be done in the poultry industry where studies show that a third of eggs are under Grade A when bought from the farmer. It is common knowledge that up to 30 percent of some of our fresh fruits and vegetables are lost through spoilage as they move from the grower to the consumer.

The problems of what happens to products after they leave the farm are unbeliev-

ably broad. They even involve the field of international relationships.

Since you in Southern Delaware produce for the domestic market, it may sound farfetched to say that you also have a direct interest in the well-being of our foreign markets. Your poultry, horticultural, and truck crops are utilized by our home consumers, whereas it is the growers of wheat, cotton, rice, tobacco, soybeans, fruits, etc. — largely in other states — who look to foreign countries for an important portion of their total market. We ordinarily do a \$3 to \$4 billion annual business in export of farm products. Fifty million acres of cropland are devoted to producing them.

Farmers of the export states are quite concerned, as you know, over the fact that their foreign markets are slipping. The drop in wheat exports over the past two years represents the production of 3.2 million acres. The drop in cotton exports represents the production of 2.3 million acres. The drop in lard exports represents the lard from a million hogs. A similar story can be told for other export commodities.

How does this concern the agriculture of Southern Delaware? It is of direct concern because the producers of the export crops, in the face of dwindling foreign markets, are going to be forced to shift to other things. Some may increase their production of poultry. Others, where conditions permit, may go in for more horticultural and truck crops. You who are already established solidly in the production of such products will face new and greater competition here in your domestic market, unless our foreign markets can be sustained.

Competition is a good and healthy thing, if it comes about gradually and naturally. But the overly rapid appearance of any kind of shifting of production, or the competition resulting therefrom, is upsetting. You, along with the other farmers of this country, have a vital interest in seeing that our foreign markets remain at high level.

The strengthening of our foreign agricultural markets is a big challenge, bigger than agriculture alone. It squarely involves our Nation's entire foreign trade policy, which, unfortunately, has long been more concerned with controlling trade than promoting it. It has not fully recognized that trade is a two-way street in which we must import in order that other countries can earn the purchasing ability to buy our exports.

The President has recommended the establishing of a new bipartisan commission to study our foreign trade problems. In the months ahead, we can expect that this commission will be established. This can be an all-important commission, for the trade welfare of our entire Nation. As its findings and recommendations are implemented, they can mean new health and vigor for agricultural trade. I recommend that you follow this matter of foreign trade closely, because of your immediate self-interest as agricultural people and because of your broader interest as citizens of a leading Nation.

